AMENDMENT

In the Claims:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Please replace the presently pending claims with the following claims:

47. (Amended) A method to inhibit the growth and development of Gram negative bacteria that excrete a mucoid exopolysaccharide, which method comprises contacting said bacteria with a composition which comprises propionic acid or a compound containing a propionic acid backbone.

48. (Amended) The method of claim 47, wherein said composition comprises 2-(4-isobutylphenyl)-propionic acid.

49. (Amended) A method to inhibit biofilm production by Gram negative bacteria that excrete a mucoid exopolysaccharide, which method comprises contacting said organism with a composition which comprises propionic acid or a compound containing a propionic acid backbone.

50. (Amended) The method of claim 49, wherein said composition comprises 2-(4-isobutylphenyl)-propionic acid.

Please cancel claims 51-52.

53. (Amended) The method of claim 47, wherein the bacterium is characterized as being Gram negative, bacilliary, about 0.2X0.8 μm, facultative anaerobe, grows between 15° and 45°C with a temperature optimum of 37°C, grows between pH 4-11 but not at pH 2, grows in AB13 medium or minimal medium, is motile, lacks a capsule, lacks spores, and produces an elastic, exopolysaccharide with a sugar content of galactose, fucose, glucose, mannose in a ratio of about 1:2:3:6.

54. (Amended) The method of claim 47, wherein said bacterium produces an exopolysaccharide consisting essentially of neutral sugars migrating at the same rate as mannose, fucose, fructose and galactose, acidic sugars migrating at the same rate as fucose and amine sugars migrating at the same rate as glucose and fucose, wherein the sugar ratio of galactose:fucose:glucose:mannose is about 1:2:3:6.

Please cancel claims 55-56.

57. (Amended) The method of claim 49, wherein the bacterium is characterized as being Gram negative, bacilliary, about 0.2X0.8 μm, facultative anaerobe, grows between 15° and 45°C with a temperature optimum of 37°C, grows between pH 4-11 but not at pH 2, grows in AB13 medium or minimal medium, is motile, lacks a capsule, lacks spores, and produces an elastic, exopolysaccharide with a sugar content of galactose, fucose, glucose, mannose in a ratio of about 1:2:3:6.

58. (Amended) The method of claim 49, wherein said bacterium produces an exopolysaccharide consisting essentially of neutral sugars migrating at the same rate as mannose, fucose, fructose and galactose, acidic sugars migrating at the same rate as fucose and amine sugars migrating at the same rate as glucose and fucose, wherein the sugar ratio of galactose:fucose:glucose:mannose is about 1:2:3:6.